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AUTHOR Mowbray, Carol T.
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ABSTRACT

Large-scale cases of child sexual abuse in settings such as day care centers have received a great deal of public and legal attention. This attention has complicated attempts to research the effects of such victimization on child development. Described in this paper are difficulties encountered by a Michigan group investigating the effects of long-term sexual abuse in a day care setting occurring in a small conservative town in Michigan about 90 miles east of Chicago (Illinois). The research effort was complicated by three situations: (1) community divisions over the credibility of the sexual abuse allegations; (2) civil suits brought by a number of parents against the day care center, its board of directors, and members of its staff; and (3) challenges to the investigatory agencies posed by civil rights litigation and an anticipated appeal of the criminal conviction in the case. These factors made it difficult to elicit family participation in the research and complicated efforts to gain access to archival data. Strategies developed to address the research problems included the creation of a community advisory panel and the acquisition of a federal Confidentiality Certificate to protect research data from subpoena. The utility of these strategies, and their methodological and ethical implications, are briefly discussed. (RH)

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RESEARCH ON OUT-OF-HOME CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE: PUBLIC AND LEGAL ATTENTION

BY

CAROL T. MOWBRAY, Ph.D.

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH

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RESEARCH ON OUT-OF-HOME CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:

PUBLIC AND LEGAL ATTENTION

Reports of large-scale sexual abuse of children in public settings such as daycare centers have become increasingly common in recent years. Policymakers have become interested in the problem, seeking strategies to prevent it and ways to best respond when it does occur. Research is needed to examine the effects on children's development of this type of victimization, of subsequent involvement in the investigatory/legal system, and of participation in therapy designed to mitigate traumatic effects. Such research is not simple, however. Inherent in it are numerous difficulties involving the identification of the victimized population, the selection of an adequately matched comparison group and the development of measures sensitive to child development effects. Also attendant are complications caused by the legal system and the public attention which these incidents often draw.

Our research focuses on multiple victims of a single case of child sexual abuse. In 1984, Mr. X, a teacher at a day care center in Southwestern Michigan, was convicted of 3 charges of criminal sexual conduct, involving a 4 year old student at the center. Investigators identified over 100 children who were probable victims over a 3 to 5 year time period. Parents suspected the real number might have been double this. The case split the community, where even now, half or more of the residents believe that all the allegations were fictitious. Mr. X was the husband of the Center's director, who was also arrested in the case, but not prosecuted. Also implicated, but never charged, were numerous other staff of the day care center.

This symposium details the experiences of our research group as we have attempted to carry out a longitudinal study of the children and families who were the alleged victims of this case of out-of-home child sexual assault. This paper will describe the case, its legal specifics, as well as the community reactions which it has produced. I will then describe how the public and legal attention which this case has generated has caused difficulties for the research team. I then go on to present strategies which we have pursued to address these problems, the utility of these strategies, and their methodological and ethical implications.

Background

The case of out-of-home sexual abuse which we are researching occurred in a small conservative town in Michigan about 90 miles east of Chicago. The Small World Day Care Center was founded in 1968 by the Niles Service League, a nonprofit women's group. Originally housed in a Presbyterian church, it moved in November, 1981 to a small building (formerly a school), on Bell Road. This property was leased from the Brandywine School District. The building was located across from the Niles Police Station and Niles Township Offices, and had an extensive public park beside and behind it.

The only perpetrator convicted in the case, Mr. X, was 28 at the time of his arrest, and earning $10,000 as a teacher's aide at the day care center. X was a local boy, a 1974 graduate of the local High School where he had been a football letter winner. Following graduation, he worked as a shoe salesman at the local K-Mart, then in 1976 as a furniture stripper. In 1980, he was hired by the preschool. According to some, the school felt fortunate to have been able to hire X. In January 1981, a new director was hired. In November, 1981

4 1/2 months after her divorce), she married Mr. X. At the time of the case Mrs. X was 32, earning $14,000 as the center's director.

According to numerous newspaper articles, Mr. X was described as a well-respected member of the community, "friendly, good-humored, easygoing". He was a former varsity football coach, assistant wrestling coach, a little league coach, coached elementary school basketball coach, and played in the local softball leagues. Mr. X. was seen as a strong family man, adopting one child from his wife's former marriage and fathering two of his own with her. However, some newspaper articles also pointed out another side of Mr. X's character. His own mother left home when he was in the fourth grade, after which he and his brother were raised by his father, a strict disciplinarian who worked most of the time. Mr. X had been fired in 1983 from his job as assistant varsity football coach for his explosive temper; during a game he threw a malfunctioning phone into the press box and began to swear. Afterwards school officials demanded he apologize to parents and students, but he refused to do this and so resigned.

At the time of the case, the enrollment in the school was 50 to 60 preschoolers, with additional numbers of older students served in the summertime and on vacations. Newspaper accounts positively described the school's reputation and the perceived high quality of its educational program. However, DSS records show at least two prior complaints. The first was in May 1982 alleging inappropriate discipline. The DSS investigation involved 4 school visits and interviews with 13 parents, 5 children and 8 current or former staff. The school was found to be in substantial noncompliance because it used the following types of discipline: hitting on

the head, spanking and spanking with a belt, slapping, putting children to bed, putting a child in a trash can, grabbing and jerking, kicking, shaking, threatening, name-calling and yelling. The school was told to comply with the law, and had its license status changed to provisional. DSS also recommended increased supervision and unscheduled visits.

The second complaint (filed 2/14/83.) stemmed from the first investigation when several violations were observed: field trips without parental notification, staff behaving inappropriately with children (kissing a child on the mouth) and noncompliance during the investigation. The school was told to become compliant or the license would be in danger of revocation.

No further complaints were received so that in 1983 DSS renewed the operating license for the Small World Day Care Center.

The Criminal Case

The legal details of this case are complex but nowhere near the level of intricacy of other child abuse cases which have captured public attention (See Table 1). The Small World investigation started in August 1984 with a complaint from one mother that Mr. X had molested her 4 year old daughter. In late August, Mr. X was questioned at the local State Police Post. The Department of Social Services then ordered the Center to suspend him from work pending the outcome of the case. In mid-September, Mrs. X was also ordered suspended from work by DSS and the Day Care Center was closed. Five weeks later, Mr. X was arrested on four counts of first degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of second degree, involving four male and female children ages 3 to 8, over a time period from June, 1983 to September, 1984. First degree criminal sexual assault requires sexual penetration. Second degree involves the intentional touching of a sexual nature with another's intimate body parts. Mr. X was held without bond. Mrs. X was charged with

two misdemeanors of failure to report suspected child abuse. In the first preliminary exam on October 30, Mr. X was bound over for trial on these charges. In late December, three families filed civil suits involving five children. On January 3, 1985, Mr. X's second preliminary exam was held on ten additional accounts of criminal sexual conduct (8 first degree and 9 second degree, involving five additional children aged 3 to 11)--this brought the number of children involved in charges to nine--four males and five females. The charges included vaginal, anal, and oral sex and fondling. Trial was scheduled for January 23 on two charges involving one child. Five additional trials were set. On January 15, the trial was moved to mid-March and a third preliminary hearing was held involving two more counts. The total number of charges against Mr. X were 10 counts of first degree criminal sexual conduct and 9 of second degree. Newspaper accounts indicated that investigator had interviewed 54 children and concluded that at least 50 were probable abuse victims.

Jury selection on Mr. X's first trial began on March 1. The trial itself began on March 21st on two counts of first degree criminal sexual conduct and one count of second degree. These charges all involved a boy aged 5 1/2, (4 years old when he was allegedly victimized), with the criminal acts occurring over a time period from April to July 1984. On April 2nd, the trial was over and Mr. X's case went to the jury. Security was tight in the courtroom. Thirteen deputies and detectives were deployed because of rumors that some parents would attempt to kill Mr. X if he was acquitted. However, after only 5 1/2 hours of deliberation, the jury returned three guilty verdicts: one on first degree and two on second. On April 23, Mr. X's attorneys filed a motion for a new trial, which was dismissed. On June 11, Mr. X was sentenced to 50

to 75 years on the first degree charge and to two concurrent terms of 10 to 15 years each on the second degree charges. Sixteen more charges involving eight other children aged 4 to 11 were subsequently dismissed on June 12. On May 30 the charges against Mrs. X were dismissed. The Prosecutor justified this by saying that the misdemeanors involved didn't carry severe enough penalties to put a 3 year old child through the ordeal of the trial.

Additional civil suits were being filed by parents, and by that June the entire number was at 21, involving 39 children . The parents were suing Mr. and Mrs. X and the Small World Board.

In November, 1985, Mrs. X filed a $10 million federal civil rights suit against the Michigan State Police, the Department of Social Services, Berrien County Prosecutor, and Riverwood Community Mental Health Clinic for false arrest, malicious prosecution, and harassment. In the Fall of 1985, Mr. X initiated an appeal of his criminal conviction.

Effects on Children

What actually happened at Small World? Our research study can't answer that question completely nor probably will the criminal investigations or court cases. In understanding the complexities which this research project confronted, however, it is important to recognize that there were definitely two perspectives on the Small World case. On the one hand are the statements by the child sexual abuse experts and by parents. One professional described the case as follows:

> The sexual acts were sometimes painful and bizarre. Other times, for children ignorant of the enormity of the transgression of values and norms, they were pleasurable. An ingenious array of threats were employed to silence the children, including

> requiring them to have sex with a sibling or a best friend and taking a picture of the act. The children were then told that, should they ever tell, the picture would be shown to authorities and they would be punished, or to their parents which would result in loss of parental love. Reportedly, one little boy was required to have sex with a rabbit. He was then made to witness the rabbit being killed and was told he would be killed if he told. There is also evidence that pictures were taken to be used as child pornography and children were taken out of the day care center and used sexually by adult men who are pedophiles.
>
> K. Faller, 1985
> (Personal Communication to Mich. DSS)

Another account summarized the alleged sexual abuses which children endured as follows:

> -Spanked or hit before the sexual act.
> -Molested during the afternoon nap time.
> -Photographed in the boys' bathroom or playroom while naked or performing oral sex on X.
> -Threatened by X not to tell anyone or he would "smack my mom's face" or "shoot me" or "shoot them (the family)."
> -Forced to perform oral sex on X, who would sometimes reciprocate.
> -Driven to photography sessions in a barn or barns which police believe may be near the Indiana border,
> -Made to watch X snap off the head of a chicken from the school's chicken coop to show what might happen if anyone tattled.
> -Threatened with baseball bats if they refused to have sex with one another.
> -Forced to have sex with siblings and those of the same sex as well as those of the opposite sex.
>
> Allan Lengel,
> Detroit News Magazine
> "Hush, hush, little children:
> A Nightmare in Niles"
> May 19, 1985.

According to these sources, the effects of the alleged abuses were equally compelling. In one article, parents told of their children displaying classical symptoms of sexual abuse: "screaming in the middle of the night,

wetting their pants, hostile behavior and an obsession with sex" (Lengel, op. cit.). The investigator from the Community Mental Health Center reported children presenting suicidal ideation, paranoid delusions, and severe depression. An outside expert from the University of Michigan described the problems she saw in children and their parents as "overwhelming":

> One child was so disturbed as to raise the question of hospitalization. One parent described to me severe migraines suffered by her four-year-old daughter which led the family to investigate the possibility of a brain tumor. Only after these medical procedures did the family find out about the sexual abuse. A little boy who was subjected to painful anal intercourse developed fecal impaction. Children have attempted to engage in sexual activities with their parents and other children. They engage in excessive masturbation. They also have many fears, such as that someone from Small World is going to kill them or their loved ones. Scores of normal, healthy children from loving families have suffered irreparable damage. (K. Faller, op. cit.)

Parents assembled in a community meeting in June 1985. Nearly a year after the investigation of Small World first began, parents were reporting increasing episodes of loss of control, bizarre gross physical movements, destruction towards objects and people, self-destructive behavior, sexual acting out, phobias, nightmares, and fears. They described the family strain they had experienced as parents blamed themselves and as children no longer had any trust in their families. Their biggest fear was for the long range--that their children would grow up to be sexual abusers themselves.

Community Response

Much of the community response to the Small World incident was of incredulity, even disbelief that these events had occurred. The Small World Day Care Center was seen as having a fine reputation, largely credited to Mrs. Mrs. X being a Certified Teacher and to the dedication of the staff. The

Board, composed of many community leaders, felt that Mrs. X was doing an excellent job. When the first allegations were made, the Mr. and Mrs. X contended that the family in question was being vindictive since the school had made a reported that family to DSS the previous spring for suspected child neglect. They said that they suspected this child had actually been molested by baby-sitters. In mid-September, shortly before Mr. X's arrest, a group of supportive parents began monthly meetings and a letter writing campaign to the Department of Social Services, the police, and the prosecutor to end the investigation. In October, they also published a support petition in the local shoppers newspaper and held a bonfire and rally (toasting marshmallows and hotdogs) at the Small World School, which was planning to reopen. On October 23, at the date of Mr. X's arrest, the President of the Small World Board said he remained skeptical of the charges and confided that Mr. X had passed a private polygraph test. Community supporters continually reiterated that no adults corroborated any of the children's stories. According to Mr. X's supporters, the children were coached and coerced by the State Police and DSS workers. Mr. X said " it's obvious they have been manipulated." Mrs. X contended throughout the investigation and the trial that her was husband was "railroaded--the victim of a sweeping witch hunt, mass hysteria.... [which has] swept the nation from Jordan, Minnesota to California to Niles."

Before Mr. X's trial in the spring of 1985, Mrs. X started a Michigan chapter of VOCAL--Victims of Child Abuse Laws. The group began by circulating a petition asking the Attorney General to investigate methods used by the State Police and DSS Child Protective Service workers on suspected child abuse cases. Community support for Mr. X seemed at its height right

before the trial. A teacher in a local School District was quoted as saying the Mr. and Mrs X are ..."excellent people" "who run a terrific school". A sergeant (M. Warner) from the Township Police Department was interviewed and stated, "there are ways to question children to get them to say what you want and there are problems in some of these families that might have a bearing on what the children say". On March 7, a letter to the editor of the Daily Star from Mrs. X stated "who taught your child the alphabet?...we did. We were there for you". On April 15, Mrs. X and the local group held a prayer vigil at the State Capitol, in response to Mr. X's guilty verdict.

Parents of the allegedly victimized children contended that the reason for X's strong community support was that Mrs. X actively courted the media, whereas parents and others involved in the case were prohibited by the Prosecutor's Office from giving interviews. Parents involved followed this dictate because they felt that to do otherwise, although perhaps personally more satisfying, would ultimately jeopardize the case. Examples were cited from prior cases where victims had been extensively involved with the press to the apparent detriment of the prosecution of the cases.

The extent to which these accusations of biased media coverage were true is certainly debatable. However, a listing of all the article titles from the Daily Star, the newspaper geographically closest to the site of the case, perhaps provides some support.

NILES DAILY STAR CAPTIONS

9-19 "Little public concern over allegations of child sexual abuse"
10-25 "Small World searched in continuing investigation"
12-29 "Families file suit against Small World, ----"
1-4 "---- bound over on 10 new CSC counts"
1-4 "---- arraigned, pleads not guilty"
1-15 "---- trial moved from Jan. 23 to March 19"
2-25 "Attorney says alleged victims 'brainwashed'"
3-1 "Sex abuse trial may boil down to word versus word"
3-18 "---- asks for 'system' changes"
"Jury selection begins today in sex abuse case
3-22 "Child takes the stand in sex abuse trial"
3-22 "Child describes assaults, where they took place--But boy also contradicts self during sex abuse trial testimony"
3-23 "Small World workers say they never saw assault"
3-27 "Doctor testifies for defense in sex abuse trial"
3-29 "---- denies abuse charges in tearful testimony"
3-30 "Parents say instant photos were at Small World"
4-3 "---- found guilty on 3 counts of sex abuse"
4-15 "---- takes abuse protest to state capitol"
5-30 "Charges dropped against ex-pre-school director"
"---- charges dropped; 'Justice has prevailed'"
6-11 "---- given long-term prison sentence"
6-12 "Maloney drops further charges against ----"
6-14 "Former Board, ---- named in civil suits"
6-18 "----: Investigators abuse their power"
6-19 "Riverwood [CMHC] may add to staff in wake of abuse investigation"
6-26 "Controversy surrounds ---- sentence"

Parent's Responses

While not permitted to get media attention, the parents did organize in reaction to the community opposition which the case generated. The first meetings of the parents were actually through group therapy sessions provided by the Community Mental Health Center (CMHC) for 8 to 12 parents. This was a way to try to meet families' demands for therapeutic services. Individual services were out of the question. Only short-term supportive services (1 to 5 sessions) could be provided, since the only child sexual abuse therapist on staff at the local CMHC was swamped with interviewing new Small World cases, providing crisis intervention, networking with the courts, and helping children prepare for depositions and testimony. In February, 1985, 2 part-time therapists were hired to reduce this

therapist's caseload, permitting her to spend all her time working with the investigation team. However, this still did not meet the service needs of the families.

After group therapy sessions terminated, the parents continued meeting as a self-help support group. On March 18, 1985, they sent a letter to the Director of the State Department of Social Services, requesting funds for more counseling services. Receiving no satisfactory reply, on April 15th, they invited the State Directors of Mental Health and Social Services to their meeting in Niles. The meeting was held on May 9th with 50 parents in attendance.

The Department Directors took action with DMH approving funds for additional therapists, waiving requirements of county match and family ability to pay (5/14/85). The Governor created a Task Force on Out-of-Home Child Sexual Abuse on June 3rd. The State Department of Education met with the 3 school superintendents from the area on July 2nd, regarding the need for training teachers on child sexual abuse detection and implementing sexual abuse prevention programs for children.

Further meetings of the Parents group produced an outline for a community-wide preventive intervention to minimize the problems of families, children, and the community as a result of the Small World incident (6/11/85). The group also fully organized itself vis a vis officers and committees in the summer of 1985.

The Research Project

Our research project began in the July, 1985. It was initiated by the State Department of Mental Health, designed collaboratively with the local

Community Mental Health agency (Riverwood CMHC) and funded by the National Center for Child Abuse and Neglect. A subcontract supported consultation from the Evaluation Center at Western Michigan University and services of graduate student research assistants for data collection, interviewing, coding and analysis. Our research objectives were straightforward, limited, and simple:

> What are the short and long term effects of alleged extrafamilial sexual abuse on young children and their families?
>
> To what extent are these outcomes affected by characteristics of the victimizing experience, of the criminal justice experience and of the child and his/her family?
>
> To what extent does mental health intervention improve these outcomes?
>
> What problems do families of alleged victims experience in their involvements with the criminal justice system and with human service agencies?
>
> How did the practices of the criminal justice and human service agencies involved in this case impact on families?
>
> Did families in the immediate community (not alleged to be victims) experience contagion effects as a result of the abuse incident?
>
> To what extent did families who came forward to have their children assessed differ from children enrolled at the day care center who did not seek these services?

To answer these research questions, we proposed a number of substudies: assessing alleged victims and their families on a number of behavioral and adjustment measures; interviewing parents; and interviewing agency staff involved in the investigation. To get details on the case and the victimizing experience, we planned to review case records; we felt it was ethically important <u>not</u> to ask families to repeat their stories yet another time for a research project. To assess contagion effects, we planned to assess a sample of all children in the school districts. Finally, to assess the

demographic differences between identified victims and other Small World children, we planned to use the enrollment records for the preschool.

We attempted to carry out these research objectives in the context of the legal actions (numerous civil suits from families for damages because of alleged child sexual abuse, the criminal appeal of Mr. X, and the civil rights suit from Mrs. X against community and state agencies), strong victim reactions (parents who felt they were triply victimized--by the perpetrator, by the disbelieving community and by the unresponsive helping systems) and equally strong community responses (a substantial number who still believed Mr. X was the victim of a witch-hunt and a massive conspiracy). As you might suspect, these factors had a substantial effect on our objectives: how, when and even if we would be able to conduct the research as planned.

Effects of Legal and Public Attention

Alleged victims' cooperation: 107 children were identified as probable Small World victims by investigators, either because of what the children themselves said or because they were named as victims by many other children. However, some of their parents denied that these children could have been victims and refused to avail themselves of services to pursue this question. Other parents were highly suspicious of anyone seeking to investigate the cases--fearing they might be out for media attention or self-gain, or pedophiles drawn in by the attention the case generated, or spies of VOCAL planted to "prove" children had lied. Other parents did not wish to communicate about the case, fearing this might jeopardize the civil suits pending; some could not talk about their experience on advice of counsel. For others, any reminder at all of the Small World incident was too painful to even consider participation.

Interviewing agency staff: The State Attorney General's Office representing the Department of Social Services and State Police agencies in the $10 million civil rights suit filed by Mrs. X. Personnel from these agencies told us they would not participate in the study unless the Attorney General's Office okayed this. The Assistant Attorney General on the case would not okay this. His rationale was that in discussing their actions in this case, these individuals might say something that could be misconstrued to imply the investigation was biased or improper. Our interviews could be subpoenaed and used to uphold Mrs. X's charges. Some of the agency personnel had fears that they would be individually named and would be personally liable for damages and/or that their professional reputations might be impugned. There were also fears that the conviction of Mr. X could be jeopardized.

Access to records: Because of the high visibility of this case, DSS officials were reluctant to permit access to their case records for research purposes without checking with outside legal authority. That authority literally followed the law and determined access was not possible unless all the identifying information was removed. This, of course, was problematic in that DSS did not have the resources to do this for the 69 cases in their files. Furthermore, our not being able to match this data with other data on our sample made it lose much of its utility.

To obtain a school comparison sample, we had to contact the school superintendents to obtain the names and addresses of all enrolled children, by grade, so we could randomly select those to be contacted. One school superintendent willingly agreed to this. The other two felt compelled to take the request to their school Boards. One school board approved and the other

turned down the request.

The enrollment list for the Small World Day Care Center was most elusive to obtain. Allegedly in the possession of DSS at the beginning of the investigation, it was no longer held by the time our research started. Other agencies asserted that either the list never existed or that it had been in the school's records which the Small World Board had taken possession of when the trial began.

Strategies Pursued

Much of our efforts have been focused on gaining the trust and cooperation of the parents and the community agencies. We established an advisory committee with representatives of the parents group, 3 school districts, state police, community mental health, state and local DSS and the Prosecutor's Office. The group has a specified purpose and meets at least quarterly. We have also held numerous individualized meetings with each of these groups. Our meetings have focused on clarifying our needs, exploring how these representatives could help us with the research project and how we could help with their concerns. On the latter, assistance has been provided in identifying funds for local projects, and making our child sexual abuse consultants and informational resources available for local needs. Project staff attempted to spend as much time with these representatives as was appropriate and acceptable to them. The purpose of these contacts was to increase personal confidence in and rapport with the research team. We have been quite successful in accomplishing this. These involved individuals have appreciated having outside experts who could respond to their concerns and provide information and feedback.

To address the legal issues and "protection" of our data from legal subpoena, we pursued and obtained a Confidentiality Certificate from the National Institute of Mental Health. Originally developed for research on drug abuse, this little known device will allow a research investigator to withhold from subpoena in any legal proceedings the names or any other identifying information in his/her research data. It took us 5 months and voluminous amounts of paper explaining our study to obtain this Certificate. The Certificate has never been tested in a court of law. However, its receipt somewhat decreased the trepidation of parent/child subjects (and their attorneys) over participation.

Besides these two specific strategies, several modes of operation have been useful. The first is keeping a low profile: we have not publicized this study through the local media or professional associations as we have with several other field research projects where we have sought maximum community participation. Research project staff wished to avoid getting ourselves pulled in as witnesses or parties to the ongoing legal actions. The second is persistence: when obstacles or refusals have been confronted, we have not quit, but have kept coming back with more explanations and information to convince the objectors or with alternative ways to proceed. For example, for parents that failed to respond we have sent follow-up letters from the parents group urging participation. We have also offered to provide reimbursement and to conduct data collection in a variety of locations. Also, in working with the state agencies rather than waiting for the usual slow bureaucratic process of review, we have made weekly phone calls and scheduled meetings to keep things moving. Third, we have applied patience and flexibility in redesigning

our research approach and the time frame for implementation. We recognized that agency personnel could not be interviewed until the civil rights suit was less of a "hot potato" and the Attorney General's Office reversed its position. In the meantime, interviews with these staff concentrated on information about general agency procedures in handling out of home child sexual abuse cases--not the specific details of the Small World Case. Finally, it has been important to have adequate resources for this study: resources to reimburse parents to participate, to pay agency staff to xerox records for us or obliterate names, to bring in outside consultants for support and for advice on new techniques, and resources to pay for frequent travel to the data collection sites.

The success of these efforts remains to be seen. Right now we have assessments on 37 of 107 children. We hope to increase this to 50. Some progress has been made in accessing case records, but not all information is yet available. Although only 2 school districts participated, we do have 138 in our school comparison sample. However, the list of Small World enrollees was never tracked down. Obtaining this enrollment list was critical to our being able to answer the research question of how the families who came forward to have their children assessed for possible child sexual abuse differed from others enrolled at the day care center who did not seek these services. Thus, it appears as though this question will have to be dropped or addressed through only impressionistic information.

Aside from whether they will produce the desirable research results, these efforts have not been without problems for the researchers. Time and effort has been an issue. Traditionally research on child development has

been carried out in academic settings. But this kind of field research requires investigators to spend their time in many non-research activities: travel, consultation, discussion, or providing expert opinion. Secondly, we have had to develop new knowledge and expertise beyond child development and research methods, e.g. in criminal and civil law, and in the bureaucratic structures of the involved agencies. Finally, there are considerable ethical issues involved: how much "aggressive outreach" with subjects should be done to increase participation? How much should a nonresponse be pursued or is it okay to keep pursuing nonresponders until they say no? Is it okay to pay the families reticent about participating when we didn't pay those who volunteered at first contact? What do we do if a parent or a child has negative aftereffects from participating in the research project? How do we respond if our data is subpoenaed? To what lengths should we go to protect it?

These are the difficulties that have confronted us and are likely to be faced by any researchers studying controversial social problems involving children. The problems have taxed our patience and our ingenuities and have forced us to develop and apply new competencies. We hope that the new knowledge produced will be useful and will be used so as to make our efforts worthwhile. We also hope that we learn from this experience so that our future field research will be less arduous. Finally, we hope that we are not so burned out from battling these complexities that we can still carry out field research in the future!

TABLE 1

Summary of Legal Actions in Small World (S.W.) Day Care Case

8/84	Mother complains to County DSS--Day Care Licensing
8/28/84	Mr. X questioned by State Police, suspended from work pending investigation
9/14/84	Mrs. X also suspended; center closed
10/23/84	Mr. X arrested: 4 counts first degree criminal sexual conduct (CSC); 3 counts second degree involving 4 children Mrs. X charged with 2 misdemeanor Counts of failure to report suspected child abuse.
10/30/84	First preliminary exam on above charges; Mr. X bound over
12/29/84	First preliminary exam on above charges; Mr. X bound over
12/29/84	3 Families file civil suits vs. Mr. and Mrs. X S.W., involving 5 children
1/3/85	Second preliminary exam for Mr. X Additional cts - 4 first degree CSC, 6 second degree 5 additional children named Trial scheduled for 1/23 on 3 charges involving 1 child 5 additional trials set
1/15/85	Trial moved to 3/19/85 Third preliminary exam - additional cts: 2 first degree CSC
3/1/85	Jury selection and trial begins: 2 first degree CSC, 1 2nd degree CSC, victim = 4 year old boy (now 5 1/2)
4/2/85	Mr. X convicted on 3 counts after 5 1/2 hours of deliberation; 1 first degree CSC, 2 second degree
4/23/85	Mr. X's attorneys file motion for new trial
5/27/85	Parents reported to file more civil suits, total = 21 involving 39 children
5/30/85	Charges against Mrs. X dismissed
6/11/85	Mr. X sentenced to 50-75 years in first degree CSC, 2 concurrent terms of 10-15 years on 2nd degree charges
6/12/85	Additional charges vs. Mr. X dropped
11/4/85	Mrs. X files $10 million federal Civil Rights suit vs. Michigan State Police, DSS, Berrien County Prosecutor, Riverwood Mental Health Clinic for false arrest, malicious prosecution and harassment
7/9/86	Mrs. X suit dismissed
9/86	Settlement of Parents civil suits (42 children, 25 civil suits), estimated at $2.0 - 2.5 million
10/25/86	Mrs. X files second federal Civil Rights lawsuit vs. 10 individuals from DSS, Prosecutor's Office and Mental Health